

**American Government:
Values, Competition, and Outcome
POL 101
Mercer University
Department of Political Science, Spring 2008**

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Class: MWF
11:00-11:50 am
Knight Hall 203
CRN 10774

Office Hrs: MWF 1-2 pm; MW 4:15-5 pm
Also, by appointment

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Many times government and politics can be confusing and sometimes overwhelming. By all counts it (government) plays an important role in our lives. We cannot cross a street, listen to the radio or attend this class without experiencing the affects of government evident in some way. To cross a street, we are subject to traffic laws; listening to the radio—the broadcast is regulated and the equipment authorized by the Federal Communications Commission; and this classroom is regulated by Georgia law, Bibb County statute, and the code of the city of Macon. So whether it is at the local, state or federal level our day-to-day lives are affected in many ways by government.

This course is designed to educate the student to the structure, nature and complexities of the operation of a citizen-based representative democracy. Without citizens possessing such an education and using it to make reasoned decisions, the very nature of our democracy is at risk.

This course is a survey of U.S. national government. At its completion we will have:

- Made a detailed study of the U.S. Constitution and its evolution through history.
- Understood the nature of federalism and of power sharing between levels of government.
- Surveyed the institutions of the federal government (Presidency, Congress and Courts).
- Examined phenomena, which affect these institutions (including the media, elections, political parties, interest groups, and public opinion).
- Discussed the process by which public policies are made and how it affects our lives.

Practical skills that will be developed over the course of the semester include:

- Group interaction and preparation.
- Short essay argumentation.
- Service Learning

Required Texts (3):

1. *American Government, 7/e* Alan Gitelson, Robert Dudley, and Melvin Dubnick. 2004 Houghton-Mifflin.
2. *How Congress Works and Why You Should Care*, Lee Hamilton, 2004. Indiana U. Press.
3. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, Morris P. Fiorina, 2006. Pearson-Longman.

Additional required reading is accessible through the class web or may be placed on reserve in the library. Students are responsible for these readings and any “handouts” given in class, as well.

Points/Point Breakdown

Event	%
Average of 3 scheduled tests and Final Exam ¹	75
Fiorina Discussion Paper	10
Congressional Simulation and Discussion Paper	15
TOTAL	100%

Final Course Grades are assigned according to the following criteria:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage of points obtained</i>	<i>Significance</i>
A	92.0 - 100%	Excellence in every facet, a model for future students
B+	88.0 - 91.9%	Very Good Work consistently exceeding expectations
B	82.0 - 87.9%	Good Work consistently exceeding basic expectations
C+	78.0 - 81.9%	Basic Competency with some good effects
C	70.0 - 77.9%	Basic Competency without severe deficiency
D	60.0 - 69.9%	Basic competency is achieved but work is weak
F	0 - 59.9%	Work is too weak to receive credit for course

3 Tests will be given throughout the semester. Together the three tests and the final are worth 75% of your grade in this class. The test format includes multiple-choice questions and terms for identification. Good responses for terms for identification can be made by explanation, description, exemplification, elaboration, definition or description, but in any case should demonstrate the significance of the term to modern exercise of American Government. Questions are derived from readings, lectures, and discussions. Make-up tests are given only with prior clearance by the instructor and are usually given on the same day as the final examination.

Prior to mid-semester, you will receive feedback on your academic performance in this course.

Final Exam includes material covered since Test 3 and a cumulative and comprehensive essay question.

Paper on American Political Landscape—using Fiorina’s book as a base for your discussion, students are to examine the political culture of the United States in terms of issues, ideas, and parties. Choose 3-5 topics (at least 2 of which should have been discussed in Fiorina) and develop a well reasoned essay about whether or not you agree with Fiorina’s proposition that Americans are truly a “moderate” people. You should cite at least 2 sources beyond the Fiorina book and be careful about the sort of websites that you cite if you choose to conduct your research via the web.

Congressional Simulation, during the week of September 19, a Congressional simulation exercise will be held. Students will be given current members of Congress to portray in the simulation exercise and students must prepare for their roles to be able to participate in the exercises and receive credit. A 5-7 page response paper will be due on September 30. In this paper, students are expected to reflect on the meaning of representative government and be critical problems that can be incurred in such a system of governance.

The paper will be comprised of 4 parts:

- Biography of your Congressperson
- A comparison of yourself and your Congressperson on 3-5 issues of your choosing
- A discussion of the effectiveness of Congress and congressional processes.
- An evaluation of your learning experience in the simulation exercise

The grade for this event will be derived based on your participation in the simulation exercise (33-%) and the quality of your paper (66%). A minimum of 3 explicit references to the Hamilton book must be included in your essay.

Lecture Series Students will want to avail themselves of the political science lecture series this semester. For each lecture that a student attends and writes a one page response to; one point will be added to their final average.

¹ Each counts 18.75% of your final grade

Writing Style The response papers **must be typed**. You should use a standard sized (10-12 point) font and be aware that grammar, spelling and punctuation errors will be penalized. Late assignments will be penalized for every twenty-four hours they are late. Please be careful to spell correctly and use complete sentences. It never hurts to proofread your work. Your work will also be graded on overall quality, logic, and merit.

Plagiarism This is, of course, cheating by not giving credit for ideas not original to you. It can take the form of “copying,” not noting direct or paraphrased quotations, or even failing to provide an adequate works cited list. Be careful to cite sources any time you borrow an idea or use another’s work to make a point, even when it is the textbook from this class

Class Policies:

Honor Code The Mercer Honor Code applies to all work completed in this class. Any class materials (tests, quizzes, papers, handouts) are not for broad distribution. If they are found in a “test file” it will be considered a violation of the honor code. I will actively pursue prosecution of violators through all means available at the university and students that cheat will fail the course. If you divulge the contents of class materials to those not having received credit for POL 101 you be considered as having violated the code.

I pledge myself neither to give nor receive help during tests nor for any individual assignments or papers, nor to use any information other than that allowed by the instructor. I further pledge that I will not allow to go unreported to the proper persons any violations of the Honor Code and that I will give true and complete information before the Honor Council


Attendance There is an attendance policy in this class. Roll is taken and more than four absences in this class can result in a penalty on your final grade. **YOU SHOULD COME TO CLASS!** In most cases empty seats do not absorb more material than do students. Empty seats do not participate better than students (though this is not true in certain cases). Empty seats certainly do not impress the instructor with your effort in his class. Five or more absences (excused or unexcused) will be considered excessive. Students may be penalized at the rate of 1 point of their final average in this class per absence for the fifth and successive absences. Exceptions to this policy are those absences documented through official communication at the university.

Cell Phones and Pagers need to be turned off for our class.

Discussions about Grades from time-to-time you may disagree or question the instructor’s assignment of a grade to your work. This is a normal part of university life and your instructor encourages such discussions since how are you going to improve if you are not able to discuss your work. Also, it is possible that your work was mistakenly assigned a grade when another would have been more appropriate. The following guidelines apply in discussing your performance. You must make an appointment and have a face to face conversation with the instructor (nothing will be adjusted via an e-mail or phone conversation and e-mails questioning grading practices will be ignored). Students are to wait for at least 24 hours before asking for an appointment. All of these practices also apply to end-of-term grades as well.

Accommodations: Students with a documented disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting. The instructor will refer you to the Student Support Services office for consultation regarding evaluation, documentation of your disability, and a recommendation as to accommodation, if any, to be provided. Students must provide instructors with an accommodation form from Student Support Services listing reasonable accommodation to sign and return to Student Support Services. The Student Support Services office is located on the 3rd floor of the Connell Student Center.

In order to receive full use of services, students with documented disabilities should make arrangements with the Student Support Services Office at 301-2686 as soon as possible. Students with a documented disability who do not wish to receive services are also **strongly** encouraged to register with Student Support Services.

CLASS SCHEDULE					
	WEEK	DATES	TOPIC	READING	OTHER
PART 1: FOUNDATIONS OF U.S. GOVERNMENT	1	Jan 9-11	Freedom, Power, and Democracy	Gitelson et al. 1	
	2	Jan 14-18	Ideology, Values, and the 2008 Race	Gitelson et al. 2	
	3	Jan 23-25	Constitution	Gitelson et al. 2 Also: <i>The Declaration of Ind.</i> <i>The U.S. Constitution</i> <i>Federalists 10 and 51</i> in the back of your textbook.	MLK Holiday JAN 21
PART 2: FEDERALISM, LIBERTIES & RIGHTS	4	Jan 28- Feb 1	Federalism	Gitelson et al. 3	Test 1: FEB 1
	5	Feb 4-8	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	Gitelson et al. 4	
	6	Feb 11-15	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	Gitelson et al. 4	Paper 1 Due FEB 15
PART 3: PARTICIPATION, GROUPS, AND MEDIA	7	Feb 18-22	Public Opinion	Gitelson et al. 5	
	8	Feb 25-29	Political Parties	Gitelson et al. 6	Test 2: FEB 29
	9	Mar 3-7	SPRING BREAK!!!		
	10	Mar 10-14	Campaigns & Elections	Gitelson et al. 7	
	11	Mar 17-21	Interest Groups	Gitelson et al. 6	Last Day to Withdraw MAR 20
	12	Mar 24-28	Media & Politics	Gitelson et al. 8	
PART 4: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	13	Mar 31- Apr 4	Congress	Gitelson et al. 9	Test 3: APR 4
	14	Apr 7-11	Congress Simulation	Hamilton (all)	
	15	Apr 14-18	Presidency/ Bureaucracy	Gitelson et al. 10 & 11	Paper 2 Due APR 18
	16	Apr 21-25	Courts	Gitelson et al. 12	
FINAL EXAM  Thurs, May 1, 2008 9 am - 12 pm					